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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I apologize for not appearing in person, but a scheduled fishing trip to a warm destination created a conflict, so I will be submitting written testimony.

I feel very strongly that a commission that is comprised of landowners and sportsmen that would oversee the workings of the North Dakota Game & Fish Department, would be a great improvement. It would increase accountability, transparency and also improve communications between landowners and sportsmen.

At this time we have a governor-appointed advisory board and yearly advisory meetings around the state. Sadly, these advisory meetings are regarded as a joke by most sportsmen and the advisory committee has no authority whatsoever.

Our director is a political appointment by the governor and he is only accountable to the person who appointed him... pretty much a one-man show. Can you imagine what would happen if an anti-hunter governor was elected? An appointment of an anti-hunter or very liberal environmentalist could be devastating to the North Dakota sportsmen. Hopefully this would never happen in North Dakota but it has already happened at the federal level with the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

I also believe that a commission would help with the amount of legislative bills before the legislature, because a lot of the landowner, sportsmen and game & fish issues could be worked out before being introduced into legislation.

I think that all but two or three states in the nation have a game & fish commission of some sort. I realize that nothing is perfect, but if we can improve on something that is so important to North Dakota I think that we should at least take a look at it. Please pass Senate Bill 2368. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wade F. Williamson